

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-09

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 098579

BANGKOK PLEASE PASS EA/VLC DIRECTOR ROSENTHAL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, LA, UN

SUBJECT: NARCOTICS: LAO INTEREST IN LEGAL EXPORT OF OPIUM

1. SECRETARY TO INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD (INCB), JOSEPH DITTERT, IN (APRIL 20) DISCUSSION WITH DESK OFFICER SAID LAO GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO BROACH IDEA OF ENTERING THE LEGAL OPIUM MARKET. DITTER EXPECTS THE LAO TO AGAIN RAISE QUESTION OF PRODUCTION OF MEDICINAL OPIUM FOR EXPORT TRADE DURING HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO VIENTIANE. ONE OF THE PURPOSES OF DITTERT'S JUNE VISIT IS TO TRY TO HOLD OFF LAO MOVEMENT IN THIS DIRECTION. DITTERT HOPES HE WILL BE ABLE TO DISSUADE THE LAO WITH THE ARGUMENTS THAT
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(1) EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF PRODUCTION WILL BE LACKING, ALMOST

GUARANTEEING DIVERSION TO ILLEGAL TRADE, AND (2) STRONGER ARGUMENT THAT ENTRY INTO LEGAL MARKET IS ECONOMICALLY RISKY SINCE THE MEDICINAL TRADE IS DOMINATED BY LONGSTANDING INDIAN,ETC., PARTICIPATION.

2. DITTERT WAS CONCERNED THAT IF THE LAO PERSIST IN THEIR INTEREST IN EXPORTING OPIUM, DESPITE UNFDAC AND INCB DIS-SUASION (WHICH WOULD BE INFORMAL), THE LAO MIGHT APPROACH THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL OF THEIR ENTRY INTO THE EXPORT TRADE. HE ASSUMES THAT THE LAO WOULD ARGUE THAT THE COUNTRY DESPERATELY NEEDS THE FOREIGN EX-CHANGE EARNINGS IT WOULD EXPECT FROM SELLING MEDICINAL OPIUM. DITTERT WAS CONCERNED THAT THE PRESENT COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL WOULD MAKE AN APPROVAL LIKELY.

3. DEPARTMENT WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION EMBASSY MAY HAVE ON LAO INTEREST IN EXPORTING OPIUM AND ON LIKELY OUTCOME OF DITTERT/ARNAUD EFFORTS TO HEAD OFF EXPORT IDEAS. KISSINGER

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